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THE INNER LIGHT

In the History and Present Problems
of the Society of Friends



by

ELBERT RUSSELL

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In the History and Present Problems of the Society of Friends

The Historical Lecture
delivered at North Carolina Yearly Meeting
on Eighth Month, the Eighth, 1945

by

ELBERT RUSSELL

First Publication
of the North Carolina Friends Historical Society

PREFACE

The North Carolina Friends Historical Society has chosen Elbert Russell's lecture, "The Inner Light in the History and Present Problems of the Society of Friends," as its first publication. Feeling that the significant treatment of this subject has great value for the Society of Friends as a whole and for others interested in Quakerism, the Historical Society seeks thus to make it available to the ever widening circle of Friendly readers.

Copies may be obtained from the Literature Committee of North Carolina Yearly Meeting, the chairman being Cecil E. Haworth, 213 Edgedale Drive, High Point, N. C., and from members of the Publications Committee of the North Carolina Friends Historical Society — Dorothy Lloyd Gilbert, Katharine C. Ricks, Algie I. Newlin, and Samuel L. Haworth, all of Guilford College, N. C.

B. Russell Branson, *President.*

The Inner Light in the History and Modern Problems of the Society of Friends

Within the last year there have appeared two careful surveys of the present situation in our Society. One of these was made by Harold Chance who visited very extensively among the various sections and divisions of Quakerdom¹. The other was made on the basis of a questionnaire sent to all the Quaker pastors in the United States by Marshall Taylor of New York. The latter gives of course an impression of conditions among Pastoral Friends only; but enough replies were received to give a fair sample of conditions and opinions in this section according to the principles of Gallup polls².

These surveys make it clear that in large sections of the Society there have come about great changes from primitive Quakerism, not merely in details of practice but in fundamental principles. It is proposed here to re-examine the fundamental principles of the Founders of the Society, especially the central doctrine of the Inner Light, and then note the causes and character of the principal changes in its application that have come about in the intervening three centuries.

The present situation seems to be critical for our continued existence as a separate religious body. It appears that the great majority of our members no longer share the traditional peace attitude of the Founders. We have failed dismally to pass on the conviction on which it was founded to the generation that has come of age since 1918. The Society has not only suffered the erosion of most of the older "peculiarities" and "distinguishing testimonies" in practice, but has borrowed from denominational neighbors without much adaptation to Quaker fundamentals many theological expressions and concepts, practices and modes of organization. In the minds of many there is no longer any vital reason why Friends should remain a distinct sect rather than join with other denominations that seem to differ from us only in the practice of the outward ordinances, which seems to them no longer a vital matter. These conditions raise the question: How far are they compatible with the principle of the Inner Light? Do they constitute an abandonment of our original foundation principle?

A marked feature of modern history is the tendency toward personal independence, self-sufficiency and autonomy. This is true in mechanics, politics, science and religion. The locomotive steam engine, the Diesel electric engine and the automobile all illustrate it. At first the benefits of steam power were confined to machines that could be reached from the engine by shafts and belts: the wonder of the locomotive steam engine and the automobile was that each carries its own generator within it. Electric power was at first confined to motors that were near enough to the power stations for current to be carried without too great loss through transmission lines whether trolley-wire, third rail or high tension wires. The Diesel electric locomotive of the streamliner carries its own generator.

There is the same tendency toward personal autonomy in government and education. In medieval times justice and security were provided for the individual citizens by a king or ruling class set over them; but in the growth of democracy the state relies more and more on the sense of justice and the self-control of the individual to guarantee security and justice to himself and his neighbors. In modern science and education the aim is not so much to provide an authoritative ready-made body of knowledge in dictionary, textbook and teacher as to train each person to think for himself and to give him the techniques of the search for truth.

✓ In the medieval church spiritual life and power, the knowledge of God and duty, were provided by the church and aside from its ministries there was thought to be no salvation. Its baptism provided regeneration, the beginning of the Christian life; its sacrament of the mass provided the dynamic of growing spiritual power; its confessional provided the means of grace for sinners through penance and forgiveness; and its pope, councils and priests taught the way of duty and the content of faith inerrantly.

✓ The modern Christian world was driven away from this authoritarianism to the autonomy of the individual more and more by events in the history of the medieval and modern church; notably by the Great Schism, 1378-1418, when there were then two rival popes, each with about equal claims to be the truly chosen successor of Saint Peter, ruling one in Rome and the other at Avignon in Southern France. Each had the political support of certain kings and princes in Europe. The church denied that the individual was competent to judge in religious matters, because his reason was perverted and his conscience depraved, but this situation required individual believ-

ers to make the all-momentous decision as to which was the true church. Even though they decided, as most of them did, that the ruler of the country in which they resided was right in his preference, that was still a personal decision. This raised the question: If the individual had the capacity to decide a question of such fundamental importance, was there good reason to deny his competence in other matters?

The Protestant Reformation moved a few steps away from a dependence of the individual on the church and toward a spiritual autonomy. The doctrine of the priesthood of believers and the right of private judgment gave the believer greater freedom and self-dependence. But it left him dependent on the Bible solely for knowledge of obligatory faith and practice, and provided ready-made interpretations of the teachings of the Bible. Calvin, to be sure, referred the believer, in case of doubt, to the Holy Spirit as the true interpreter of the Bible, but in case of differences as to what the teaching of the Spirit was, he gave the church the authoritative and final word. All the early Protestant sects believed that there could be no true development of the spiritual life without the sacraments, for which the church and its priesthood were essential.

The Protestant was nevertheless forced more and more to seek within himself the sources of spiritual life and knowledge. There were many Protestant sects, each claiming to be the true church, each professing the Bible as the ultimate authority. Each quoted the Bible as validating its own claims. The individual was therefore compelled to make choices, which practically all of the Protestant sects denied that he was capable of making. He was driven to interpret the Bible for himself. When the churches differed as to the leading and teaching of the Holy Spirit as the interpreter of the Scriptures, he was compelled to decide which was correct. He had to answer such questions as these: Which sect has a valid priesthood? How many sacraments does the Bible require? Which of the many creeds and church policies are Scriptural? There was no escape from the necessity of settling these questions for oneself and by one's own inner conviction as to what was right and true.

Quakerism was one of the sects in the Seventeenth Century, which boldly faced this necessity and claimed that man's competence, by the grace of God, is equal to his necessity; and that God has provided within the human personality without dependence on outward

authorities the means of spiritual life, power, knowledge, grace and moral direction. The doctrine of the Inner Light, under a great variety of names and designations, was the recognition and proclamation of the spiritual freedom and autonomy of the individual soul. Calvin had taught that only the *elect* are given the Spirit by special dispensation, so as to enable them to believe and accept the Gospel; George Fox boldly claimed that God has endowed *all* men with spiritual capacity for the spiritual life and that each has within himself, quite apart from outward institutions and other human helps, the means of spiritual life, knowledge, guidance and power by drawing upon the divine source within the soul.

This is not a question of a divine or a human source of spiritual light, life, and salvation. Just as practically all power, light and life on earth come ultimately from the sun, so all spiritual energy, life and truth come from God. All Christians agree on that. The great issue is whether these sources of goodness can come directly to the individual man, or whether they must be mediated by something external, whether sacrament, priest, Bible or church. The Catholic church holds the latter view. The Quaker contention is that man carries within the soul by divine provision all the needful apparatus for the spiritual life.

The two extremes represented by Catholic and Quaker correspond to the means of satisfying two essential needs of the physical life. The human body needs oxygen and nitrogen which compose most of the air in which we live. It is equipped with lungs by which, without other help, it can secure moment by moment the life-giving oxygen. But it has no such means of appropriating nitrogen from the air. It requires the intermediate agency of plants and animals to "fix" the free nitrogen of the air into proteins which the body can use. Without their mediating agency we would starve for nitrogen in a gaseous ocean of it. The Catholic insists that the gifts of God are like nitrogen. They can only be obtained through the mediating agency of the true church. The Quaker is sure each individual can receive directly and immediately from God all the good gifts which he longs to give to his children.

It is important to remember in using such illustrations and analogies, that spiritual life, power and knowledge are always personal. Spiritual life is begotten of persons. Spiritual power is not something that can be delivered like a can of gasoline or a storage battery

or a tank of oxygen for separate or future use. It comes by direct transfer from person to person. Spiritual knowledge cannot be transferred by the delivery of an educational film. These boons of the spiritual life and experience are the result of personal association and communion. It is because the risen and living Christ may be known within the individual as giver of life, teacher, lover and strengthener that the individual believer carries his own resources with him, independent of the paraphernalia, forms and ministrations of any outward source. A classic passage from Fox's *Journal* reads: "Now the Lord God opened to me by his invisible power, that every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ and I saw it shine through all; and they that believed in it came out of condemnation to the light of life, and became children of it; but they that hated it, and did not believe in it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ . . . I was sent to turn people from darkness to the light that they might receive Jesus Christ."³

The Quaker Founders used many terms to express this fact of God known and working within them, such as the Inward Light, the Light of Christ, the Light Within, the Seed, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit, the Root; and later, the Inner Light, the Truth or simply Truth, "that of God" in men, "the divine principle" or "the Universal and Saving Light." None of these expressions implied any inherent goodness or way of salvation in men apart from the presence and work of God.

Friends did not regard the Inward Light as an infallible guide. Its source, to be sure, is the infallible Spirit of God, but the treasure is in earthen vessels.⁴ Nevertheless, it is the best that is given us. One of my schoolmates at college had a peculiar way of walking. When one of her classmates teased her good naturedly about her walk, she replied, "Don't make fun of my walk; it's the only way I have of getting about." It is easy to make merry over the eccentricities of some Friends who claimed to be moved by the Spirit. But no better way of spiritual direction has been found. Quaker disownments compare favorably with the cruelties of the Inquisition. The bitterness of our separations was milder than the hatreds of Protestant religious wars. Our eccentricities of Biblical interpretation are not worse than those of certain modern sects who claim to find infallible guidance in the Bible.

Early Friends learned to avoid at least some of the pitfalls that await those who try to follow the Inward Guide. The psychic life

is a babel of voices, a welter of diverse impulses. One must learn by careful and consecrated attention and sometimes by sad experience, to recognize the Shepherd's voice, as Woolman put it. Friends found certain tests that helped, like buoys marking the safe channel into a harbor. For one thing, impulses to evil are not of God. For another, one must be sincere, i.e. honest with himself and conscientious. In the third place, the Inward Light may transcend conscience; it coincides with our highest ideal of what ought to be, especially of what we demand of others. Lastly and most important, the Inner Light is the Inward Christ and must agree with the principles of Jesus' teaching and character.

The Founders were especially insistent on the identity of the historic with the Inward Christ. It was Christ who spoke to the condition of George Fox and brought the great transformation and release, which started the Quaker movement. Again and again Friends individually and officially asserted that the Inward Light of Christ was not a different Christ from Jesus of Nazareth.

"We own Christ to be a Savior; but we lay the main stress upon the life which took upon it the manhood. And that life, wherever it appears is of a saving nature: and doth save . . . yet none, in the measure of this life, can deny the appearance of the fulness of life in that body of flesh, and what He did therein towards the redemption and salvation of mankind.

"And we believe that this God hath given his son Christ Jesus into the world, a free gift to the whole world, and that every man that cometh into the world is lighted by him, that everyone may believe and be saved."⁵ Since they owned no spirit or Light other than that which appeared in Jesus, they checked all supposed leadings, openings, or revelations by the recorded spirit and teaching of Jesus.

A passage from John Wilhelm Rountree sums up the Quaker attitude: "The difficulties of the doctrine of Inward Guidance are, as James Nayler's experience reminds us, serious and practical. I would suggest that the solution lies in a deeper interpretation of the person and message of Jesus Christ. Apart from the thought of God as we see Him set forth in Jesus, and the common consciousness of truth as revealed in lofty souls who have been touched by His spir-

itual fire, it is not evident how the faults of individual interpretation are to be corrected . . . (But) with Jesus as the Gospel, witnessed in the conscience of a civilization infected by His Spirit, I see the balance wheel to the doctrine of the Inward Light.”⁶

Aviators flying at night are able to keep their course by flying between parallel “beams” of radio signals. If they deviate from the right course, they can hear the signal from one station but not from the other. In between the beams they hear the reassuring hum that means safety. Friends are most assured when the Inward Christ and the historic Christ speak in unison, “make one music.”

It is important to recognize how the four elements of the Christian life arose in Quaker experience. They seem to have come in the following order: life, energy, doctrine, and duty. The testimonials of the Founders of the Society emphasize that their initial experiences were of new life and power. After George Fox had left the priests of the Established Church and the ministrations of the Nonconformists, he made his great discovery of the inwardness and sufficiency of the Inward Christ. The whole creation had for him a new smell. He came up through the flaming sword into the paradise of God, and felt himself in the state of Adam before the fall. He realized the power of the infinite Ocean of Love that overflowed the infinite ocean of darkness and sin; he came up victoriously “atop of the Devil.” The Inward Christ was not only able to speak redemptively to his despairing condition, but became his constant Teacher and Guide. These experiences and leadings preceded conscious teaching of them by the Bible or doctrines about them. Theory followed experience of life and power, as in science hypothesis follows experiment. He found himself filled with the love of God; he lived in the life and power that took away the occasion of all war, he shared the redemptive love of God for all men. He wished to turn them all to the inward teacher and savior; to the Father who is not a God afar off but near at hand “in the heart and in the mouth.” The testimonies of other early Friends are similar.

This was the testimony of James Nayler: “I was at the plough, meditating on the things of God, and suddenly I heard a Voice saying unto me, ‘Get thee out from thy kindred and from thy father’s house.’ And I had a promise given with it. Whereupon I did exceedingly rejoice, that I had heard the voice of that God which I had professed from a child, but had never known him.”⁷

William Dewsbury says: "And this I declare to all the inhabitants in England, and to all that dwell upon the earth, that God alone is the teacher of his people, and hath given to everyone a measure of Grace, which is the light that comes from Christ . . . And this I witness to all the sons of men, that I came not to the knowledge of eternal life by the letter of Scripture, nor by hearing men speak of the name of God. I came to the true knowledge of the Scriptures, and the eternal rest . . . by the inspiration of the Spirit of Jesus."⁸

One notices in these testimonies the absence of rationalization. Where doctrines or creeds are regarded as the primary thing in religion, there is usually an attempt to fit the experience to the doctrine. But in these the upspringing of new life and the accession of fresh energies are made primary.

All these elements of the Inner Light — new life, power, doctrine, love — remained throughout the varied history of Friends but were stressed in different ways at different periods. Dr. Sippel maintains that the one constant element in Quakerism through all its periods and branches is the philanthropic interest, the passion to relieve human suffering and to secure a fuller and larger life for men, the sense of the constraining power of divine Love. However, in some form or degree all these elements were consciously involved in later Quaker experience: new life, power, teaching and love. At times theological orthodoxy was pushed to the fore, as when Barclay's *Apology* became a doctrinal authority and especially after the Evangelical influence became dominant. At other times the organization came uppermost as when the traditional views, testimonials and "peculiarities" were enforced by the elders, and nonconformists were rigidly disowned. The authority of the Bible was stressed also by the Evangelical influence, until it became an outward authority instead of simply a spiritual help to the understanding of God's character and the mind of the Spirit. Certain elements of the Society stressed in later times an emotionally powerful experience of new birth and of sanctification as the vital element. Twice only in our history was the whole doctrine of the Inward Light formally disowned; once by Isaac Crewdson, leader of the Beaconite secession in England (about 1835) and once by Ohio Yearly meeting at the height of the Evangelical influence in America; although in the latter case, it was only to make sure of the doctrine of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

The minute read: "We do not believe that there is any principle or quality in the soul of man, innate or otherwise, which, even though rightly used, will ever save a single soul; but that it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed; and the Holy Spirit is sent to convince the ungodly of sin, who, upon repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, are justified by His blood; and we repudiate the so-called doctrine of the inner light, or the gift of a portion of the Holy Spirit in the soul of every man, as dangerous, unsound, and unscriptural."⁹

There has been a tendency with a few Friends, along with the emphasis on the outward authority of the Bible, and largely as a consequence of it, to practice the ordinances, especially baptism; and a few, both among the Evangelicals in America and the Beaconites in England accepted the celebration of the Lord's Supper also as obligatory. On the whole, however, most Evangelical Friends both in England and America have not taken up the practice of the outward sacraments. In many cases, this remains the chief distinction between them and some other Protestant sects, such as Nazarenes, Church of God and the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

The two most profound modifications of the initial concept of the Inward Light in our history were through Quietism in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries and through Evangelicalism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries. We shall take them in order. In speaking of these I can only dwell on certain general tendencies. At the same time I am thoroughly aware that they affected individual Friends in very different ways and that the characteristics ascribed to Quietism and Evangelicalism were probably never all true of any particular Friend or meeting. The period of Quietism in our Quaker history was roughly from 1737 to 1828. There had been in Barclay and Keith especially among the Founders of the Society a remnant of the Calvinistic distrust of human nature and especially of the human reason as fallen and incompetent. During the period of Quietism this was reinforced by the influence of certain Catholic mystics, especially by the writings of the French mystic Madame Guyon. Quietism was essentially a method of seeking the guidance of the Spirit of God within the spirit of the worshipper, a way of consulting the Inward Light. Distrusting outward exercises and forms as distracting, and so interfering with the openness and sensitiveness of the worshipper to the divine voice or "movings," it feared any "creaturely activities." It also believed that conscious and de-

liberate effort to learn God's will, and all reasoned and purposeful thinking, interfered with the soul's communion with God. So the worshipper sought to attain an attitude of suspended activity both inward and outward in order that God might be found and understood. This fitted well with Friends' meeting for worship held on the basis of silence; so that in time, silence was emphasized not merely as a way of entering into worship and a mode of common procedure in it, but as an essential element in itself. Friends began to apologize for breaking the silence. They justified it only by so strong a sense of duty that they could no longer remain silent and be true to their leading. At times they explained that they had to speak in order to relieve their minds or regain inward peace.

The fear of creaturely activity lead to great hesitations on the part of the traveling ministry, especially about their movements and about breaking the silence. These hesitations were accompanied often by great inward struggles and agony, so great was the fear of "getting ahead of" or "outrunning their Guide." Job Scott on one occasion attended meetings thirteen days in succession before he got sufficient assurance to enable him to speak.

Another limitation of the guidance of the Inward Light was imposed by a subtle and generally unconscious shift in the meaning of the word "immediate." The Founders had stressed the immediate guidance of the Light over against any mediated guidance through priest, church or book, and against any necessary channeling of God's forgiveness or gifts of grace through sacraments or ritual. But in Friends' reaction against dependence on ritual and outward forms of worship, against programmed meetings and prearranged services, the word "immediate" shifted gears silently to another meaning. "Immediate" came to mean "extemporaneous," "on the spur of the moment," "without premeditation or planning." This tended to eliminate not only prearrangement in religious programs, but seemed to run counter to formal and regular religious instruction, regular Bible reading or instruction, and all planned religious activities. It ruled out organized religious work of any kind, such as missionary work on a long-term, organized basis, First Day Schools and even regular family worship. The traveling ministers, whose activity was so characteristic and so vital for the life of the Society planned their work but a step in advance and proceeded only "as way opened." They limited thus the willingness of God to give guidance for a whole program or for a long period or denied the capacity of men

to sense that will except when confronted with a situation to be acted on in the immediate present.

A third type of limitation imposed by Quietism on the leading of the Inward Light consisted of the traditions or what were later called the "peculiarities" or "testimonies," which practically confined the operation of the Light to the customs, forms and vocabulary of the Founders. Any inward motion that ran counter to them was suspected and usually discarded as not a "pure moving," as "of the creature" and "not in the life." They fenced in the permitted areas in the life, thought and worship of acknowledged Friends. Persons who refused to be bound by them were disowned from the fellowship. Even those who seemed to condone violations of them or who cooperated with others who worshipped or lived differently were put without the pale of the spiritual fellowship.

An amusing illustration of this frame of mind occurred in the old Miami meeting in western Ohio. An itinerant Methodist minister rode by the meetinghouse one day as Friends gathered for Quarterly meeting, so he hitched his horse to the rack, and went in without knowing what denomination they represented. He found a seat, as it happened, by the neighborhood wag, who was a birth-right member but not wholly in sympathy. The meeting settled into silence; and finally the Methodist minister began to be uneasy that nothing was done. He leaned over to the wag and asked: "What are they waiting for?" "Can thee raise a hymn?" the latter asked. The visitor was glad to help out, since the song leader seemed to be delayed, and promptly started a rousing hymn. The story ended that it broke up the meeting, as Friends poured out into the yard, "like a swarm of angry bees." Earlier Friends might have waited patiently to the end; and a few of them might even have respected a sincere spirit worshipping God in his own way.

One result of thus limiting the range and means of the Spirit's guidance was the partial loss of the sense of Christian realities; the substitution of signs and labels for the experience of God himself. In large measure it brought again the "shams" and "notions" against which George Fox and his co-workers had protested so vigorously. For the Inward Light to be a completely adequate guide in life, all the windows of the soul must be kept wide for the Light to come in;

God must be allowed to speak with whatever voice and in whatever language and at whatever time he sees fit.

These limitations on the channels of Divine guidance were not accepted without occasional protest and there were great souls who refused to be wholly limited by them. William Penn protested that all noble souls are of one religion no matter how diverse the liveries they wear.¹⁰ Margaret Fell protested against thinking that God, who clothed the moors and fells with flowers, confined his peoples' dress to Quaker drab. John Woolman recognized the voice of the Inward Christ in *The Imitation of Christ* even though the author was a Catholic monk, and in John Huss who refused to violate his conscience at the command of church and empire. Madame Guyon was recognized by many generations as having heard the same "accents of the Holy Ghost" which came to them. Stephen Grellet found that underneath their robes and ritual many of the prelates of the Russian Orthodox church had been baptized into the things of the kingdom of God."

Early Friends discontinued the use of the sacraments of the Protestant churches, because they found it possible to have spiritual rebirth and spiritual communion with God without their mediation. The only way they could prove to their neighbors that the outward ordinances were not necessary to full spiritual life was to show the fruits of the Spirit without using them. This was a long way from saying that they were in themselves wrong or that spiritual life and communion were impossible if the ordinances were used. Barclay makes the admission that many found the spiritual realities while using them.¹¹ The fundamental Quaker position was that they were religiously indifferent, except insofar as they were regarded as substitutes for spiritual realities themselves; that neither circumcision or uncircumcision, neither baptism nor the lack of it, availed anything, but only "faith working through love." But in the ages of Quietism Friends came to believe that the use of the outward sacraments necessarily interfered with or prevented the inward communion, and therefore refused fellowship with those who used the outward elements without inquiring carefully whether they were spiritually reborn or guided or enjoyed the spiritual communion.

Within the limits set by the traditions and peculiarities, the Society of the Quietist period nourished many tender spirits, who carefully shared the Spirit of Christ, in feeling the pain and sorrow

of their neighbors, as if they were their own. They pioneered in work for prisoner and slave, for the Indians and neglected classes. Following the Inward Light produced very Christlike characters, judged by their fruits. They shared their time with neighbors when they were sick, shared their possessions with them when adversity befell, and labored with Christlike concern for the wayward and erring. Despite the limitations, inhibitions and hesitations of their worship, they had hours of close communion and inspiring fellowship. Under the stimulus of the reading of the Queries or when some minister with a gift for speaking to conditions probed their lives and motives closely, the "Great Searcher of Hearts" laid his finger on their failures and sins and said "Thou ailest here and here and here." When now and then someone proved derelict or even fell into gross sin, the meeting humbly labored to restore him in a spirit of meekness, looking to themselves lest they also be tempted. The membership maintained under the Inward Spirit's ministration and guidance a high level of peace and purity, as each, to quote Whittier,

"Holding, as in the Master's sight,
Act and thought to the inner light,
The round of his simple duties walked,
And strove to live what the others talked."¹²

One result of the fear of creaturely activities and of lifeless forms was that members lost that intimate knowledge of the Bible and full knowledge of the historic Christ which characterized the generation of the Founders. Puritan England had known the Bible; men carried copies with them and discussed and quoted Scripture at every turn. George Fox and his contemporaries shared this acquaintance with the Bible. But in the period of Quietism, with some notable exceptions, this familiarity was lost by the succeeding generations of Friends. They no longer could check so well the origin and character of the inner voices by the Jesus of history.

The second great influence modifying the central position of the Inner Light among Friends came from the Evangelical movement. Through John Wesley and the Methodists it came primarily from German Pietism into England and powerfully influenced the Church of England. At the beginning of the Nineteenth Century it reached a very influential section of English Quakerism through the association of leaders like the Gurneys and Frys with Evangelical philanthropists of the Established Church in the anti-slavery movement, prison reform, and similar reform movements. Prominent English

Friends introduced it into America. In the Great Revival in the second half of the Nineteenth Century, it influenced American Friends a second time, chiefly through the Methodists.

Most important for its initial influence on American Quakerism were its emphasis on Bible study, on conversion as a definite experience, on the outward authority of the Bible and on a particular creed as a prerequisite to and an essential element in saving faith, especially the belief in the depravity of human nature, the deity of Christ; and justification secured through the blood-atonement. It fostered religious education but feared freedom of thought, because it distrusted the human reason. These features involved for Friends a profound modification of Friend's attitude to the Inner Light. Evangelicalism put a theological belief first and the experience of a renewal of life second instead of the reverse order. It made the Bible an outward authority instead of primarily a guide book to the personal religious experience. It stressed forgiveness of sins as the essence of salvation, instead of the deliverance from sinning; it emphasized deliverance from the consequences of sin in the next life more than deliverance from the power of sin here and now. This change was hardly made up for by emphasis on the leading of the Holy Spirit and on sanctification as a second experience. The evangelical tendency was to shift the source of truth and salvation in large part to things outside the soul of the Christian. It set up a legalistic moral code for believers and judged them by it. Orthodoxy requires an authoritative interpreter of the Bible; so that however much Friends continued to insist in theory that the Spirit interpreted the Scriptures for each person, in practice the evangelical influence tended to produce authoritative interpretations of the Bible by the church or by influential leaders. It fostered doctrinal intolerance and led to separations and refusal of fellowship in worship and work with others pronounced to be unsound. It weakened faith in the Light in all men and in their potential divine sonship. It was in general eager to "save souls" but lost some of Jesus' sense of the infinite worth of the whole man. Evangelical Friends continued the traditional philanthropies; they worked for peace, the abolition of slavery, the welfare of the Indians, freedmen and prisoners. But the fear of "salvation by good works" and of "mere morality" tended to divert attention from these as essential expressions of the Christian life.

The Evangelical ideal had much in common with Quakerism. It insisted on personal religious experience as the basis of assurance;

it stressed the historic Christ; it emphasized the moral content of the Christian life; it looked to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and it was evangelistic and missionary in spirit. The likeness was often more apparent than real, hardly extending beyond the vocabulary used. Early Friends often used the current language of Christian thought which was common to all Christians, Catholic as well as Protestant. But the content and emphasis were often very different, due to the place the expressions occupied in the whole system of theology. Among Friends Barclay and Penn especially had used the terminology of current Protestantism quite freely. Fox also did this at times, especially in statements intended to show that Friends were essentially Christian, as in his letter to the Governor of Barbados Islands. The same was even more true of the "Declaration of Truth and the Scriptures" by Holder, Copeland and Doudney in New England (1657).¹³

In its total pattern, however, Evangelicalism profoundly modified the ideals of Quakerism. The Founders had great confidence in truth and great openness toward it. The attitude of Fox, Penn and others toward the natural sciences was unusual for religious people in their time. Friends produced a remarkable number of scientists both in England and America. They were not inhibited by a literal understanding of the Bible, especially the earlier chapters of Genesis. They were free to follow the truth wherever the Spirit of truth led them. In religious thought and life they were not in bondage to the letter of Scripture. Their final authority was their own sense of truth as the Spirit within taught them. Men like Barclay, Fisher and even Gurney were not afraid of scholarship even in matters religious, and especially in the study of the Bible. They trusted the Spirit, if followed carefully and reverently. The Evangelical doctrine of original sin or human depravity on the other hand tended to introduce an element of externality into religious attitudes. If men are guilty before God for something that they did not do themselves from free choice, then they can only be saved from sin by something done without them; salvation becomes an outward *transaction*; secured by the death of Christ to appease God, so that he will *impute* a righteousness to men which they do not actually have; salvation comes to consist primarily not in making men righteous but in getting God to treat them as righteous. Men get the benefit of this transaction not by letting the Inward Christ transform them into his own image, but by a faith that is only secondarily related to character.

Early Quakerism stressed salvation as consisting essentially in making men righteous by the inworking Spirit, the condition of which is faith — which is essentially trust in the power of Christ to deliver them from inward bondage to the flesh in response to obedience to the Light of Christ as He gives strength and guidance. The salvation wrought by Christ is thus primarily inward and ethically creative. George Fox never tired of denouncing the religious teachers of his day who taught that salvation was primarily external and future and “pleaded for sin for term of life.”

Very important, therefore, was the change which Evangelicalism made in Friends’ preaching, thinking and living regarding the nature of Christian experience. When the doctrine of human depravity made Friends suspicious of inner leadings and reasonings, they expressed divine guidance in terms of the Holy Spirit, who was thought of not primarily as identical with the spirit of Jesus but as essentially an agency coming in (often sporadically) from the outside, conveying a power or sanctity, which could be retained apart from his continual indwelling or felt presence. To early Friends the Spirit of Christ was an indwelling presence; religious experience flowed from a continuous fellowship; but the tendency of Evangelicalism, especially of Methodism, was to stress occasional and notable experiences, such as repentance, conversion, sanctification, backsliding and renewal. Quakerism sought for a continuing relationship like the calm peace of married companionship: Evangelicalism the mountain top experience of acquaintance, proposal and wedding day, the storm and stress of occasional quarrels and “the sweetness of forgiveness.” The Inward Christ represents the high plateau of “righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost”; the Holy Ghost of the Evangelical experience represents rather the occasional ministrations when he descends, or comes down or is poured out on the believer, fills him, baptizes or sanctifies him.

Jesus identified the Holy Spirit with his own person and work. The Spirit of Truth who was to take his place with believers would not speak of himself, Jesus asserted, but would bring to mind Jesus’ teaching; he would take Jesus’ truth and reveal it to them. He calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth; one of his chief functions is to continue Jesus’ teachings and lead believers to the whole of truth. Paul also asserts that the Lord is the Spirit.

Evangelicalism lost touch with much of the gospel record and especially with the teaching of Jesus; it emphasized certain parts in

Jesus' career, such as the Virgin birth, the miracles, the death and resurrection. But the Jesus "who was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power and went about doing good" was relatively neglected. The Holy Spirit was not identified in character, message and work wholly with the Jesus of the Gospels nor with the Father of all, whom he revealed.

Evangelical theology seemed to exaggerate the doctrine of the Trinity into a belief in the different character, purpose and attitudes of the Holy Spirit toward men. Early Friends, when they listened for the voice of God within, listened for the Voice that was heard in Galilee with its message of the Universal Father who loved all men, who willed not that any perish and sent his Son to die to save them; who is kind to the unthankful and evil; who is long-suffering, forgiving, and eager to give good gifts to his children. Likewise when the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, speaks and guides, the early Friends expected to perceive the Light of Christ, who said "forbid him not; no one can do a good work in my name and speak evil of me," who rebuked the spirit of James and John, when they wanted to destroy an inhospitable Samaritan village; who had compassion on the sick and on the leaderless people; who forgave men even their blasphemies against him; who enjoined love of enemies and blessed peace-makers; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; who prayed for those who crucified him; who refused the sword and crown and trusted truth, love and the Cross to bring salvation to men. They had no stronger evidence of his deity than his love; for God is love. Nor could they believe in his divinity without believing in his teaching, even as Jesus protested: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?"

Another change which came with Evangelicalism was the divorce between its conception of regeneration or the new birth and that presented in the teaching of Jesus. Possibly here is the greatest gulf between the Evangelical and original Quaker ideals. Evangelicalism has rightly stressed the crucial importance of spiritual rebirth, for Jesus taught that membership in the kingdom of God requires it. It overstressed, however, the time and emotional elements that are common in adult experience, and has neglected the cases of gradual growth and less spectacular change that are common in young people who grow up under religious influences such as are found in a Christian home, school and community. As staunch an

Evangelical as J. J. Gurney recognized the artificiality of such limitations. He said:

"I was by no means insensible, in very early life, to religious considerations, being no stranger from the first opening of my mental faculties, to those various visitations of divine life which often draw the young life to its Creator and melt it into tenderness. If religion has indeed grown in me (as I humbly believe it has, although amidst innumerable backslidings), it has pretty much kept pace with the growth of my natural faculties for I cannot now recall any decided turning point in this matter, except that which afterwards brought me to 'plain' Quakerism. Cases of this description are in my opinion in no degree at variance with the cardinal Christian doctrine of the necessity of conversion and the new birth unto righteousness."¹⁴

Evangelicalism had also a quite limited moral ideal for the converted man as compared with that set up in Jesus' teachings. According to the former the Christian must keep the ten commandments and be a law abiding citizen; he must not swear, drink or (sometimes) use tobacco; and he must abstain from worldly amusements, especially from dancing, card playing and theater-going. Some ministers have even included among things forbidden, wearing jewelry and using cosmetics for women, attending baseball games or horse-racing for men. These requirements are usually thought of in a legalistic way rather than as natural expressions of the Spirit of Christ and of neighborly love.

The Christian pattern as given by Jesus involves a wider area; it reaches the social and institutional life as well as personal relations. In the first place, it excludes outward and physical limitations and distinctions. Family or racial heredity had for him no spiritual significance: "What is born of the flesh is only flesh." The lines of spiritual cleavage run through classes and families: "One is taken and another left." Jews as Jews have no ticket of admission to the kingdom of heaven nor are Gentiles, as such, excluded. Whosoever shall do the will of God is spiritually a member of the family of Jesus.

Jesus was indifferent to outward things in relation to the spiritual life. External washings, clean or unclean meats, and outward sacrifices (blood of bulls and goats) and even circumcision have, he taught, no essential relationship to the Christian life. Paul carried this step further and insisted that not only is circumcision of no value

but that uncircumcision is equally indifferent. Nothing he asserts, is unclean of itself.¹⁵

The Biblically defined character of the spiritually born child of God has been most amazingly neglected by Evangelical teaching. The three most important passages in which Jesus defines it are: Love your enemies that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. Yet it has been generally held that a man may be acceptably converted and continue to kill his enemy as a soldier; hate foreign enemies; and even hate pacifists!

Paul and John likewise put the stress on brotherly love for all men, when they define the new creature in Christ Jesus; neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts but only "faith working through love": "In Christ Jesus there can be neither Jew nor Gentile"; "When you have died to sin, you put on Christ Jesus and above all you put on love which is the bond which makes Christian character complete." "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God." Evangelicalism has rightly stressed statements in First John about the necessity of believing that Jesus is the Christ or confessing that he is the Son of God; but has been strangely blind to the definition of the moral consequences of that faith. "And this is his commandment that we should believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ and love one another." This is where the Inward and historic Christ speak in unison.

As a result of these influences the doctrine of the Inner Light has been reduced to little more than a good conscience with some Friends; with others it has been quietly renounced in practice, if not in theory, because of the continual encroachment of the ideas of an alien system, which tend to shift the center of religious life, practice and authority away from the continual presence and inworking of the Spirit of Christ in the soul; to put redemption solely in the life and death of Christ, or to refer it to a future event such as the judgment day or to admission to heaven after death; or to exalt the Scriptures into an authority above the voice of the Spirit in the soul; or to separate the character of the Holy Spirit from the character of

Jesus or from the character of God as Jesus revealed him; or to set the Christ of history over against the Inward Christ.

It is easy to exaggerate these changes and ignore the elements of Quaker spirit and life that have remained unchanged. Evangelical Friends have kept to a large degree the traditional philanthropies and sympathy for needy and suffering humanity. We have developed able leaders in the work of the church and in movements of social reform. We have raised up able educators and statesmen in missionary and relief work. We have enlisted many of the young people in the work of the society. We have maintained schools and colleges beyond our financial ability and stretched our concern for the heathen into a world-wide network of missions. Evangelical Quakerism is in fact distinguished more by religious activities than by saintliness of character.

The tendencies noted above are important not so much for their theology but because of their effect on life and practice in weaning us from attention to the Inward Light of Christ and dependence on Him; and from the life and teaching of Jesus. It has cooled our passion to minister to all men; inclined us to follow the practices of the half-pagan world; to accept the dictates of the state "as the will of God," to modify our sense of God's will for us so that we teach a gospel that lets men with un-Christlike acts and dispositions still believe they were born of the Spirit of Universal Love, while hating and destroying their fellowmen for whom Christ died.

We must go back to our original belief that externals are irrelevant; that neither silence nor music, baptism nor the lack of it; neither the outward elements of communion nor a stereotyped liturgy; neither ordained priests, nor the absence of them, commends us to God or is an essential condition of salvation or the Christian life. As I see it, it is the loss of reliance on the Christ within that has resulted in the loss of our first devotion, and of our exceptional character.

Let us have programmed meetings if we find them helpful to finding the will of God in the way of Christ; let us have singing, pastors with prepared sermons, and anything else that produces men led by the Spirit of Jesus, transformed into his likeness, and born of the Spirit of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us have organized missions, high pressure revivals, evangelistic campaigns and

any other methods of spreading the gospel, if they are effective in bringing men to "Christ within the soul and then shutting the door and leaving them there." Or let us follow the older ways, observing the peculiarities and worship on the basis of silence if these help best to so live that Christ lives in us. These are but "outwards," indifferent in themselves, to be judged and used only according to the effectiveness in leading to Christian character. If definite conversion converts men to Jesus' teaching, so that Christ is formed in them; if it makes them sons of God who love all men as Christ loved them, who love their enemies and bless them that persecute them, and are peacemakers, then these methods will be justified of their children.

If the doctrine of sanctification through the inworking of the Holy Spirit, whether by eradicating or by suppressing the sinful nature, whether by one or by many experiences, produces a holiness like the love of God and the unselfish love of the Christ of the Cross, then the doctrine will be justified by its fruits.

"It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profiteth nothing." It was the distinctive fruit of the practice of following the Inner Light in the early days that justified it. It is the failure of the new doctrinal statements and new methods so often to produce the fine fruits of Christian character as defined and illustrated by Jesus, that raises the question of their consistency with the requirements of the present age. What have we to offer the world that the rest of the Protestant world does not offer, if it is not the spiritual autonomy of the individual, Christian freedom and democracy, and universal brotherhood? Modern liberalism and fundamentalism alike have used the terms, but most of them in the present crisis which tries men's religious faith, have failed, as have so many Friends, to bring forth the fruits of Christ's kingdom.

If we must have mourners' benches, let us use them now by all means, to mourn over our going after the gods of the nations round about us, to repent of our selfish, unchristlike spirit, and seek forgiveness of our all-merciful Father, that we have, to paraphrase Whittier's prayer, "taken for the all perfect love thou art some grim creation of our heart."

NOTES

- 1 *For the Consideration of Friends*, The Peace Section, The American Friends Service Committee.
- 2 Mimeographed Report, circulated privately by Marshall Taylor.
- 3 *Journal*, 8th ed., 1891, Vol. I, pp. 34, 35.
- 4 Cf. Edward Grubb, *Authority and the Light Within*, p. 84.
- 5 Burrough, *Works*, p. 439. Cf. also Fox, *Epistles*, Whitehead's Preface; and Howgill, *Some of the Mysteries of God's Kingdom Declared*. Sect. XI.
- 6 J. W. Rowntree, *Essays and Addresses*. p. 244-45.
- 7 *Life and Works of James Nayler*, p. 12.
- 8 *Life*, Chapt. IV. (*Friends Library*. Vol. II. p. 228.)
- 9 Cited in Russell, *History of Quakerism*, p. 506.
- 10 *Some Fruits of Solitude*, No. 519.
- 11 Barclay, *Apology*, Prop. XIII, Sec. xi.
- 12 The Preacher.
- 13 Bowden, *History of Friends in America*, Vol. I, pp. 91, 92.
- 14 *Memoirs of J. J. Gurney*, Vol. I, p. 22.
- 15 Romans 14: 14-20.



DATE DUE

APR 6 '48	NOV 9 '62	OCT 8	OCT 11
MAR 1 '49	JAN 13 '63	FEB 20	MAY 03
MAY 17 '49	JAN 31 '63	MAR 5	DEC 23
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MAY 26 '57	APR 6	MAR 25	
FEB 24 '59	APR 20	MAR 29	
DEC 7 '59	MAY 18	APR 10	
DEC 21 '59	APR 29	OCT 10	
MAY 18 '61	MAY 9	OCT 26	
AUG 20 '61	OCT 10	NOV 9	
MAR 3 '62	OCT 24	NOV 23	
JAN 14 '64	FEB 12	NOV 15	
MAR 19 '64	DEC 27	NOV 28	
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